

Old Santa Cruz

• • By Ernest Otto

(Editor's Note: The late Ernest Otto, famed and beloved waterfront correspondent for The Sentinel and writer of the "Old Santa Cruz" column, left a number of columns written before his death. They will be published weekly by The Sentinel.)

What remains in Santa Cruz and what is gone from the older days in the side streets along the flat is an interesting thing to recall.

In those days, Vine street extended only as far as Locust street, although it later was extended to Church street as it now is.

Then it began at corner of Mission street where the Bossos have their locksmith establishment and turn out keys daily. Adjoining is the Costella and Caiocca general hardware store.

In the seventies in that area was the long livery stable building, the Legal stables. It was kept for years by J. L. Trefry and then was transformed into a grist mill and a place of business for a feed and grain firm, operated by J. F. Simpson who had moved from his location at River and Bulkhead streets. Afterward the Stice brothers and Carl Stice operated the stables.

On Vine street for years was a shoemaker named Bird. He was one of the town characters. His wife was known by the shaker bonnet she always wore. We boys used to go there to bum shoemaker's wax. It was black and dirty, but this beeswax was gum to many.

Back of the stable barns was a large vacant lot which was used as a run for the horses in the livery stable. A cleated runway enabled them to climb back into the barns and their stalls.

Next to the vacant lot a home was built in the seventies. Among the families who resided there the longest were the George Denison family, the Anthony family and the family of S. I. Morris, the photographer. In later years, this house was razed to the ground.

Adjoining it was the well known Scott residence which was operated as a rooming house for many years. The first section, built in the fifties, was moved to the rear of the lot and a large section was added in the eighties. It always was filled with roomers.

To the south of the Scotts' house was a narrow run to the barn in the rear.

Next was a vacant lot which eventually became the attractive garden of the Pacific Ocean house. It had especially beautiful roses, orange and lemon trees, dracena palms and other semi-tropical trees. There also was in the garden a vine clad summer house which was most attractive to the hotel guests on warm days.

This garden was a part of what is now the macadamized parking lot of the Pacific Gas and Electric company.

Also on this corner was the largest amusement center of the city — the rink. The structure likely was erected in the sixties as a roller-skating rink.

Here the farmers' fairs were conducted. These became the county fairs and were staged there until the huge building at the corner of Front street and Soquel avenue (or Bridge street as it was called then) was built. the rink, after that time, was used for grand balls.

It then was subdivided into a number of stores. One of the main business places in it was the hardware, tinsmith and plumbing establishment operated by the late James D. Tait.

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